

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF CONSULTATION OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS: Address by the Secretary of State (Rusk) to the Nation, February 2, 1962⁶⁰

Good evening. Thank you for joining us. I have reported to President Kennedy on the recent meeting of inter-American foreign ministers in Punta del Este,⁶¹ and he has asked me to share this report with you.

We met there with the other American Republics to decide what we should do together to meet the mounting Communist offensive in our hemisphere. This offensive is worldwide, but there is no part of it which concerns us more intimately or more seriously than the systematic subversive attack under way in the Americas, spearheaded by the present regime in Cuba.

It is for that reason that I should like to talk to you this evening about this conference and its results. First, a word of background. In August 1960, 17 months ago, there was a meeting of foreign min-

⁶⁰ The statement printed here is taken from pp. 90-91 of *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962*.

⁶¹ See *supra*.

⁶² Department of State press release No. 76 (text as printed in the Department of State *Bulletin*, Feb. 19, 1962, pp. 267-269). The Secretary's address was carried by the principal radio and television networks.

⁶³ See *ante*, docs. III-11 and 12.

isters which discussed the Cuban problem in San José, Costa Rica.⁵² At that time the foreign ministers agreed to condemn outside intervention in the affairs of this hemisphere, and they reaffirmed in broad terms their faith in democracy and their rejection of totalitarianism. But they were not then prepared to take concrete steps aimed at the Communist offensive in general and Cuba in particular. In fact Cuba was not even named in the declaration, and some delegations said that it should not be interpreted as applying specifically to Cuba.

But during these past 17 months there has been a far-reaching change in the attitudes of both governments and peoples.

The Communist nature of the Castro regime has become more apparent to all—and so have its aggressive designs.

The Castro regime voted consistently with the Communist bloc at the United Nations. It built up its military strength with the help of Communist arms. It used its embassies in Latin America as centers of espionage and subversion. Thirteen American governments broke off all diplomatic relations with Cuba.⁵³ It sought to intimidate, subvert, and harass free governments and nations, as reported to our meeting by the Inter-American Peace Committee of the OAS.⁵⁴ And Castro himself, in early December, publicly confessed what everyone had come to know: that he is a Marxist-Leninist and would be until he dies.⁵⁵

At the same time it became apparent throughout the Americas that Castroism was *not* the answer to their hopes for economic and social progress. They saw many Cubans who had originally joined with Castro in the honest belief that they were striking a blow for democracy and for economic and social reform become disillusioned with his dictatorship and his subservience to a foreign power. And, perhaps most important of all, they saw new hope and real action in President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, a peaceful, constructive, and co-operative effort by free men to achieve rapid economic and social progress through free institutions.

We met at Punta del Este against the background of these changes. What was accomplished?

First, in a strong resolution that named names and minced no words, we declared unanimously—except for Cuba, of course—that the Castro-Communist offensive in this hemisphere is a clear and present danger to the unity and freedom of the American Republics.⁵⁶ Even as we met, reports came in from several countries of efforts by small Communist-led minorities to disrupt constitutional government and the will of the majority.

Second, the ministers agreed, again unanimously, that the hemisphere is bound together by two powerful ties: by its commitment to human rights, social justice, and political democracy and by its commitment to exclude from this hemisphere the intervention of outside

⁵² See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1960*, pp. 218-221.

⁵³ For a list of these governments, see footnote 45 to doc. III-12, *ante*.

⁵⁴ See *ante*, doc. III-9.

⁵⁵ Reference to Prime Minister Castro's address of Dec. 2, 1961; excerpts in the *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1961.

⁵⁶ See Res. I of the meeting, contained in doc. III-12, *ante*.

powers. On these grounds we concluded, again unanimously, "That the present Government of Cuba, which has officially identified itself as a Marxist-Leninist government, is incompatible with the principles and objectives of the inter-American system."

Third, on the basis of this unanimous conclusion, a two-thirds majority decided "That this incompatibility excludes the present Government of Cuba from participation in the inter-American system."⁵⁷ Seventeen had declared that "the present government of Cuba has voluntarily placed itself outside the inter-American system." Included in this majority were those who felt themselves to be, and are, under special attack by Castro communism.

Fourth, recognizing that the threat of Cuba is an active threat to the security of the hemisphere and not merely a matter of ideological incompatibility, the foreign ministers, once again unanimously, officially ejected the Cuban regime from the Inter-American Defense Board,⁵⁸ where their representatives had already been excluded from confidential discussions.⁵⁹ In addition we established special machinery within the OAS to recommend joint action that can block Communist subversive activities before they reach the level of insurrection or guerrilla war.⁶⁰

Fifth, this meeting decided, again unanimously, to prohibit trade and traffic in arms between Cuba and the other American countries. No American government is now selling arms to Cuba, but we are determined to do everything necessary to stop illicit trade or traffic to or from Cuba within this hemisphere.

Sixth, the Council of the Organization of American States was asked to explore further trade restrictions, applying to Cuba the same kind of machinery that was applied last year to the Dominican Republic,⁶¹ and giving special attention to items of strategic importance.⁶²

Seventh, and finally, the foreign ministers unanimously recognized that the struggle against communism in this hemisphere is not merely a question of a defense against subversion but of positive measures as well—economic, social, and political reforms and development, to meet the legitimate aspirations of our peoples. In this spirit the governments committed themselves anew to the great constructive tasks of the Alliance for Progress.⁶³

The rollcall of votes on these resolutions provided a dramatic demonstration of two important points.

First, that Cuba stands alone in the Americas. No other nation voted with its delegates in opposition to any of these resolutions. We listened to their longplaying records of invective and abuse and then

⁵⁷ The second and third points of the Secretary's address refer to Res. VI of the meeting.

⁵⁸ The fourth point refers to Res. VII of the meeting.

⁵⁹ See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1961, p. 306.

⁶⁰ Reference to Res. II of the meeting.

⁶¹ See *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1960, pp. 257-270, and *ibid.*, 1961, pp. 326-338.

⁶² The fifth and sixth points of the Secretary's address refer to Res. VIII of the meeting.

⁶³ See Res. V of the meeting.

got on with our business. They made no progress with their threats and pleas, they could find no comfort in any differences among the rest of us, and finally they withdrew altogether.

The other point is that honest debate was a sign of strength in the Organization. Unless we know that the votes which are cast represent the convictions of the governments, the votes themselves would fail to carry conviction. The fact that differences were registered is an insurance that the unanimity, when expressed, was genuine.

There was no disagreement over the incompatibility of the Cuban regime and the inter-American system. But some governments sincerely felt that additional legal and technical steps were necessary before the exclusion of Cuba from participation in the official agencies of the system could be finally settled. While they abstained on that vote, however, all joined in the condemnation of communism and the present Cuban regime.

Those who spoke for our own Government were united in their efforts and their satisfaction at the result. President Kennedy's leadership and the respect in which our neighbors hold him were evident throughout the conference.

We were fortunate in having as advisers to our delegation the chairmen and ranking minority members of the Senate and House subcommittees on inter-American affairs: Senator [Wayne] Morse, Senator [Bourke B.] Hickenlooper, Congressman [Armistead I.] Selden, and Congressman [Chester E.] Merrow. They were of great help. We worked on a nonpartisan basis, with full cooperation between the executive and legislative branches. And every American can draw satisfaction from the results of the conference.

But there was an even larger result. An international organization such as the Organization of American States, the OAS, can maintain its vitality only if it faces up to the issues—no matter how difficult—which the moving course of history places on its agenda. Because the problems posed by Cuba and the Communist offensive in this hemisphere affected each government somewhat differently, there has been some uncertainty about whether the OAS was capable of taking hold of this crucial issue on a collective basis. I believe that uncertainty has now ended.

The OAS demonstrated that it is a living political body capable of reconciling different points of view in order to move ahead together. It has proved itself capable of boldly facing a problem of utmost gravity and taking constructive steps toward a solution. It has proved itself capable of sustaining a lively debate on a matter of law and procedure without losing its poise or its underlying unity. Above all, it has demonstrated how democratic nations, bound together by commitments of principle and geographic association, can conduct serious business as friendly and dignified partners.

No conference could, by itself, eliminate the problem of communism in this hemisphere. But the results of this conference were deeply reassuring. The hemisphere has taken a long stride forward.

I might conclude with a point on which there was, again, unanimity. An empty seat at the OAS table is no cause for joy. The rest of us

have no quarrel with the Cuban people—only with the regime which has fastened itself upon that country. Our Latin American friends are bound to the Cuban people by powerful ties of culture and tradition. We ourselves expelled colonialism from Cuba and provided for its independence. And that is why all delegations joined in a common hope that we shall be able to welcome a free government of Cuba back into the family of the hemisphere.

We talked at Punta del Este about defending the hemisphere against the Communist threat, because that was the subject of our meeting. But defense is only a part of the job. Our main business is the great creative task of building in these continents vibrant societies, firmly rooted in the loyalty and pride of their peoples, societies which are secure from attack primarily because their own people would not have it otherwise.

Thank you, and good night.